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THE  
**Fraternal**  
and REMEMBRANCER

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BAPTIST MINISTERS' FELLOWSHIP

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# **The Baptist Ministers' Fellowship**

## **WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT DOES**

### *Formation*

The Baptist Ministers' Fellowship was constituted by the fusion in 1939 of the Baptist Ministers' Fraternal Union, founded in 1906, and the Pastoral Session set up some ten years later, it being felt that these two complementary organisations could more effectively function if merged together.

### *Organization*

The business of the Fellowship is transacted by the officers and a representative committee. The Pastoral Session held in the Spring of each year is the Annual Meeting at which opportunity is afforded for the discussion of matters important to Baptist ministers and for the delivery of addresses by distinguished members of the Baptist and other Denominations.

### *Spiritual Aims*

The Fellowship seeks to contribute to the spiritual life of its members by promoting Quiet Day Conferences and especially by the Sunday morning service of mutual intercession—members being asked to remember each other in prayer in the early hours of the Sabbath.

### *Library*

A lending library is directed by the Rev. H. M. Angus. Groups of not less than five neighbouring ministers appoint one of their number to act as local librarian, to whom boxes of books are supplied half-yearly, every member thus receiving ten volumes per annum. The only charge is cost of carriage and is quite nominal when divided amongst the Group. In special circumstances arrangements are made by which individual members may receive the benefit of the library.

### *Mutual Help*

The Fellowship seeks to inculcate the principle of bearing one another's burdens by rendering help in urgent cases so far as its limited resources will allow. Correspondence should be addressed to the Rev. W. H. Pratt.

### *Magazine*

"The Fraternal and Remembrancer" is published quarterly as the official organ of the Fellowship. Its pages contain contributions of importance to the ministry, record official transactions and provide an opportunity for the mutual exchange of opinion on matters affecting the ministry, and the Church.

### *General*

The Fellowship endeavours by all means in its power to spread the spirit of Brotherhood and to promote the interests of all its members.

### *Membership*

Every Baptist minister, whether on the Accredited list or not, is entitled to the full benefit of membership. The subscription is 2/6 annually, payable in January, including the cost of the magazine.

At present about one thousand Baptist ministers are members.

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## THE UNCONSUMED BUSH.

THE Editors suggest that I should give a report of impressions gained by my journeyings among our churches. It is an interim report, but two-thirds of my year of office have passed and some kind of judgment becomes possible. There are compensations in a war-time Presidency, for our people value so highly service that in normal times would be revealed as very ordinary. In our darkness, "how far that *little* candle throws his beams!" Can I throw any light on the condition of our churches? Let me give my verdict first, and the evidence afterwards. Everyone knows the fine motto of the Presbyterian churches: "*Nec tamen consume-batur.*" This year has left upon me that same sense of the Church's persistence; again and again I have turned aside in thought and worship to see this strange sight, that the bush is not consumed.

For the last fifteen years I have been "a travelling preacher," and without selecting engagements have accepted the first invitation that came for any date that happened to be free. I must surely have seen representative sections of our denomination; probably I have preached in one-fifth of our churches in England and Wales, and the experience leaves me hopeful and confident about the future of our witness.

The amazing thing is that our churches survive. Most of us know something of the difficulties encountered by big business houses in their attempts to adapt themselves to war-time conditions. With vast resources, with the power to command compliance on the part of employees, they have been able to evacuate staff and plant to more peaceful surroundings.



Even so, such dislocation has caused immense loss. Our churches have in most cases had to remain, save where bombs effected the removal of their buildings. Even there, the church remained, gathering together with fine courage, improvising means for worship, fellowship and service. No one knows the whole story; fragments are revealed from time to time, but when the war is over, let tribute be paid to the ministers and church members who stood fast and held fast in the challenging hours.

Travelling is a slower process than of old, and whilst fares have increased by one-sixth and the time occupied by journeys is about forty per cent. more, accommodation seems to have been cut by one-half. People are much more communicative, however, and British reticence seems to be a war-time casualty, not to be regretted. The only instance of inconsiderateness I have seen towards men of the Forces was on the part of some first-class passengers, which made me hope for the speedy extermination of that snobbish discrimination.

We were travelling from a city which had had a raid the previous night, when a passenger asked a young R.A.F. man how it was that our airmen had achieved such wonderful results. He said: "It's because of the spirit of fellowship in all ranks, from the highest to the lowest." "That's what the whole world wants," said the questioner, and everyone murmured assent; for the rest of the journey the talk was of fellowship, and we knew something more of it before the journey ended.

On one occasion my host was showing me the site of a new factory, which was to produce all sorts of synthetic products. Rather feebly, I said: "Well, nobody will ever produce synthetic sermons." The chauffeur, a Welsh deacon, turned round and said to me: "I'm not so sure. I've heard a few!" Readers may be left to discover various applications of this remark, but I gain the impression that our churches are more than ever desiring, and receiving, pulpit teaching that is not a mere synthesis of impressions of the week, but which proceeds from a divine revelation and concerns the great issues of life and the life beyond.

Questions are asked wherever I go about Providence and Immortality. We apparently need to give more instruction on Divine Righteousness, for the existing mental confusion in relation to the war can be traced back in many cases to haziness on questions of sin and penalty.

The hospitality offered to a President is a means of grace, but most of all I remember with gratitude the occasions when I have been guest in ministerial homes. No week-ends are more enjoyable than those spent under a brother-minister's roof, and intercourse with these gifted, dedicated men and women adds to my confidence about our people. Ministers are adjusting themselves to new conditions with inventiveness and enterprise, and no one acquainted with all the facts would endorse the old gibes about the supposed rigidity of our order of service or methods of work. Where conditions permit the holding of evening services, they are particularly appreciated; in most cases afternoon services are the rule. What a joy it will be to sing our evening hymns together in the house of God again!

Railway reading is more difficult than formerly, and my loss is great, but I have spent some time reading volumes of "The Baptist Magazine" of a hundred years ago. In those days Baptists wrote to their denominational journal protesting against the performance of Handel's "Messiah" ("as desecrating God's holy word and degrading the divine theme of redemption"); another crank urged that ministerial bronchitis was due to "high pulpits." The Committee of the Baptist Union needed to issue a warning to Baptists against accepting bribes for their votes, and the neglect of provision for ministerial old age was described as "a denominational sin." Several ministers had to keep schools, in order to eke out their slender incomes. Slavery persisted in America, and negroes were held by Christian churches as part of the endowment of the ministry. "The Baptist Church at Newcastle" had in its membership "very few that understood the English language." Was the difficulty due to the use of Gaelic or the Northumbrian accent? As I compare those days with ours, we appear to have improved. The only item on the other side is that a hundred years ago, when the population of these islands was only eighteen millions, we had 96 students in training in five theological institutions, whereas to-day, for a population more than doubled, we have made nothing like a proportionate increase.

My report on present conditions appears to have changed into a historical retrospect. From both points of view, however, I draw the same conclusion: The bush is not consumed, and, as in days gone by, we may depend on "the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush."

P. W. EVANS.



## BRITAIN AND EUROPE.

## I.

TWO offers, each unprecedented, were made to two great European powers in the course of 1940 by the British Government. The offer to France came at an hour when Britain and France were tied together on the face of the precipice. France fell and Britain held.

The second fateful offer to a European power came in October just before Molotoff left for Berlin. Even yet the terms have not been published officially, but it is understood that they included (1) a pledge by Britain not to join in any Anti-Russian military aggression after the war; and (2) on certain conditions, a promise to give Russia a voice in the Peace Conference.

How important this offer may be eventually will be granted by those who remember what a dread of Soviet Russia was felt in the Paris Peace Conference.

In 1919 there were in France and in Britain movements—the British movement backed by Mr. Winston Churchill—for military intervention to crush Bolshevism on Russian soil. Above all, there existed a haunting fear that Germany, in her defeat and humiliation, would turn Bolshevik and so imperil the social structure of Western Europe.

That possibility at the end of this war, if Hitler falls, will be increased tenfold—a possibility largely overlooked both by the idealists, who have been busy planning a “democratic United States of Europe,” and by the realists, who are insisting that next time there must be no mistake about showing any mercy to the Germans.

The British offer to Soviet Russia, as yet, neither accepted nor rejected, is a guarantee that, on certain conditions, the present European frontier of Soviet Russia will, if Britain wins, remain unmolested.

## II.

Thus Europe is defined for us geographically as Europe with Russia left out—a Europe shrunk to its size in the Middle Ages. It is with Western Europe that we have to do, the Europe that is now nearly in its entirety governed from Berlin and ruled by the German Gestapo.

Were Hitler to win the war it would be a Europe from which the British had been driven out—to stay out. To us



Dunkirk was a miracle: to Hitler, it was the end of the British on the Continent, never again to have any share in its life or any say whatsoever in its politics.

For a century or more England internationally played with considerable skill the game of "balance of power." We ventured into European affairs when it suited us: we withdrew when isolation was in accordance with our interests.

Nor did the League of Nations make a profound change in our political attitude to Europe. The League was meant to be a bridge between our island and the Continent. We never crossed that bridge to leave behind us for good "balance of power" and the rest of the paraphernalia of the old diplomacy. Our nearest approach to a full membership of the League of Nations occurred in the early days of Mussolini's foul aggression on Abyssinia. One of the sayings current at Geneva at the time was that "at last England has joined the League." The rejoicing was premature, for very soon afterwards, the Hoare-Laval pact, secretly negotiated in Paris, proved that we were back at the game of "balance of power." Mussolini must not be allowed to be beaten—that was the real meaning of the Hoare-Laval arrangement—lest the "balance of power" in Europe be destroyed.

It was this dualism—the facing both ways—that made of the MacDonald-Baldwin period the most deceiving and deceitful in all British history. If we believed in collective security, we could have achieved it; if we did not believe in it, why did we not frankly confess our unbelief and re-arm? We made the worst of both worlds because those who led us could never make up their minds whether Britain was in Europe or out of it. All that is over. Hitler has done what no one else has been able to do since Pitt, and Pitt only for a quarter of a century. Hitler has bound us to Europe for all time.

### III.

What form, then, is this permanent British share in Europe likely to take? That is the question upon which much thinking has been focussed by those who have persisted in planning for the future in the midst of the harassing conditions of war.

It has been of interest to watch the change in the trend of the thinking about a post-war settlement as the war proceeded. Amongst intellectuals, in the early months of the war, Federalism and Federal Union were in the forefront of the discussion.

Then, all of a sudden, the mood changed. Less was heard of a "Federated Europe" and more of a "Better Britain" based on social security—Britain as a working model of a co-operative State and as the first instalment of a better European order after the war.

"European Federal Union" suffered two grievous political set-backs, one, in the collapse over-night of any hope of an Anglo-French federation, upon which most, if not all, the schemes for a European federation had been based, and the other, indicating the tendency amongst the European States now enslaved by Nazi tyranny. On November 11th, 1940, the exiled governments of Poland and Czechoslovakia signed a new pact, as between themselves, to come into force on the conclusion of the war—a forerunner of a better order in the New Europe that is to be. By a formal and solemn declaration, burying all their differences, they entered, as the Declaration worded it, "into a closer political and economic association," not, however, on a basis of federation, but on the basis "of independent and sovereign States."

Some kind of European federation there must be, especially in economic affairs. Politically, for Britain, European federation is immensely complicated by the fact that Britain has, and will continue to have, one foot in Europe and the other in the British Commonwealth, while more and more the hope of our people is turning to something larger still in the coming, some day, of an Anglo-American Commonwealth.

Personally, although there may be no signs of it now, I think the solution of Britain's permanent place in Europe will be found in a "Back to the League" movement. There will be a reconstituted League in which the small nations of Europe can paddle their own canoes but, as it has been said, paddle them in convoy.

All will depend on the kind of leadership which the democracies can create. The fault of the last twenty years was not in the Covenant; the fault was in the Covenanters.

#### IV.

In preparation for a post-war settlement, what service can the Churches render? Directly, the Churches had no influence on the making of the Treaty of Versailles, nor are they likely to have any direct influence on the making of the next peace. The Churches of Christendom are too divided. Never will



the Vatican, for instance, co-operate *in action* with Protestant bodies at any official peace conference.

If directly the Churches can do little, indirectly they can achieve much. They can create the atmosphere in which governments may do what is right, and refrain from doing what is wrong, in any government action towards the making of the greater civilisation which must be our aim and hope.

Apart from the primary task of fashioning the leaders, of "building the builders," there are some essential things that the Churches could do. May I venture briefly to name some of them if only for the purpose of discussion?

(1) The Churches could exercise considerable influence in the future in preventing the moral collapse that occurred in the Allied and Associated countries after the victory of 1918. It is a fact beyond dispute that the legislatures in Britain, France and in America, elected in 1918-1920, were legislatures that were morally bankrupt, with a higher proportion of "hard-faced men," without moral enthusiasm, than had been seen before at Westminster or in the French Chamber or in the American Congress. Spiritually, after the victory of 1918, the legislatures of the democracies touched bottom. That was the reason behind the reasons why, with the war won, we lost the peace.

(2) The Churches could also bring all their power to bear on the postponement of any final Peace Conference until the time was propitious for a negotiated peace. Armistice terms there will have to be, but, if the precedent of Versailles and of the period from 1920 to 1924 has taught us anything, there should be an interval of at least four years between the imposing of an Armistice and the negotiating of a durable peace.

(3) In our own country there is a need for the re-asserting of what used to be called "the Nonconformist Conscience" as a healthy and powerful force in our political and national life.

I heard a Cabinet minister once say in private that there was a Nonconformist leader whose reactions mattered much to him. "When I have said or done something," he confessed, "of which I feel doubtful, I am almost certain to hear from Dr. Clifford about it." That was a fine tribute. We would agree that Dr. Clifford was a leader in ten thousand, but we would agree also that he was representative of a tradition in our midst—the tradition of Nonconformity as a power in our national life, at once feared and respected by men in whose hands are the levers of the political machine.

Most important of all in these days of mental perplexity on the deeper issues, can the Churches give us what, for want of a better English phrase, we must call "a view of the universe" which shall be spiritually bracing and which intellectually will carry conviction?

The meaning of it all—that should be a first concern of the Churches. This strange war, which started before it began in the "civil war in Spain" and which may go on after it has finished in civil wars over large areas of the Continent, and the Great War, which we see now was only a prelude to this Greater War! Are the two wars of our generation not parts of something else—of a world revolution that has been in progress for a long time and will be in progress for a long time yet?

Are we not witnessing the tremendous drama of Human Society changing its foundations from domination to co-operation? In this age of a mighty transition, nations and individuals suffer cruelly. Nevertheless it is out of such suffering that there must come, not only a "Better Britain" and a "Better Europe," but a Christian order of the universe.

This is a vast theme, the theme of "Britain and Europe," in days like these. Yet looking out upon it all and adapting great words by Browning it can be put into three lines:—

That sad, obscure, anarchic state  
Where God unmakes but to re-make a world  
He else made first in vain, which must not be.

GWILYM DAVIES.

### PRAYER IN WAR-TIME.

EVERY working minister knows that the war has filled the minds of many of his people with perplexing problems connected with prayer. They are asking many questions, of which the following are representative. Was the calm sea during the evacuation from Dunkirk an answer to prayer? If God, as by a miracle, saved so many of our men at Dunkirk, why did He allow France to collapse, and Coventry and Southampton to be mercilessly bombed? Is there any point in our praying for our homes to be preserved from the Nazi bombs, or in praying for our lads in the Air Force to be preserved in battle? Am I right in praying for victory when I know that it will mean the slaughter of many Germans? Are not my prayers for victory cancelled out by the prayers of German Christians for a Nazi



victory? This last question was recently posed with an air of complete finality by a writer in the "New Statesman," with a view to demonstrating the utter futility of all prayer. He evidently thought he was saying something very clever. Actually he was saying something utterly stupid. As Edwyn Bevan has pointed out, his argument "would be apt, only if Christians regarded prayer as a kind of natural or magical force directed upon God as upon an inanimate body. But each side appeals to God as Some One who cares for justice, because each side believes its own cause to be the just one. One side or the other must be mistaken. The two prayers are not, therefore, analogous; one is for the victory of the right, one for the victory of wrong, and if man's judgment about right and wrong is very fallible, God is here the judge. To say that it is ridiculous to ask God for victory because the other side asks God for victory, is precisely as if we would maintain that there is no such thing as justice at all, no such thing as right and wrong, because in every conflict both sides appeal to the principles of justice, and maintain that these principles support their contention, and not that of the enemy.

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Prayer for victory would, no doubt, be absurd if we asked God to give our side the victory because it is ours, not because it is (as we believe) the side of justice." (Christians in a World at War, p. 90.)

It is worth remarking that in time of war much popular religion is bound to have its expectations disappointed. It is a fair-weather religion, a religion of the heart rather than of the conscience. It is anthropocentric rather than theocentric. Its emphasis is upon what can be got out of religion rather than upon what can be put into it. It is therefore very much at the mercy of calamities and convulsions, in the midst of which it almost dies, like the Christianity of many a convert in the mission field, who returns to paganism as soon as his cow, upon which he has lavished many prayers, dies. Among us such people have lingered too long amid the shallows of the Christian life, and we, on our part, have failed to instruct them in any adequate fashion. We have given them "uplift" instead of doctrine. For our failure we shall pay during this war, as we did during the last. P. T. Forsyth saw this in 1916, and warned us of our danger in his "The Justification of God," but I fear we gave little heed to his warnings. This popular religion, whose expectations are doomed to disappointment, must be dealt with tenderly and affectionately. It is easy enough for an educated person to lay bare the fallacies underlying such rudimentary religion; it is quite another thing to deal with the people to whom it belongs—especially when they cannot see for their tears, and cannot think because their hearts are broken. Their dearest hopes and most cherished plans are in ruins, through no fault of theirs, and they cry: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my husband had not died."

The next thing to be said is that the present war has raised no new problems: it has simply accentuated the old problems which have always been attached to the theistic interpretation of the universe. It has revived most poignantly such questions as: "Why is evil permitted to exist, and how can its existence in the world be reconciled with belief in its divine government? Is the world of human affairs governed by Divine Providence or not? Now prayer and Providence are closely intertwined, as H. H. Farmer has shown in his "The World and God," which should be read again in times like these. Prayer and Providence are intertwined because it is obviously futile to ask the help of God if He is not in control of the universe. Further,



to deny Providence is to deny God. "When one goes, the other goes; for there is no place for a God who reigns but does not govern" (P. T. Forsyth). But does God, in His providential care for His people, change the course of nature in answer to their prayers, and give, for example, calm weather at Dunkirk, and in the middle of September a storm which smashed the boats the Nazis had got ready for the invasion of England? As the recent correspondence in the "Christian World" has shown, many would unhesitatingly reply "Yes." One Baptist minister went further and wrote that God, by His gale, drove the Nazi boats which were not sunk, back into harbour, and there provided a sitting target for our bombers. That, in my judgment, is going too far, for more reasons than one. It seems to me that God, in His wisdom, has imposed upon nature certain laws, which are consistently carried out. Such a world, governed by law, is, we must believe, the best school and training ground for beings endowed with the power of choosing between good and evil. There is, however, no sufficient evidence that God ever deflects the operation of these laws in response to human prayers. In this connection careful attention should be paid to the two prayers which Jesus refused to pray. (See John 12/27, Rv. Mg., and Matthew 26/53.) True prayer, then, will "not seek to alter or subvert the natural order in so far as it is fixed or appointed by the will of God." These are the words of one of our own ministers, R. H. Coats, in his "The Realm of Prayer," a book evidently written during the last war, and full of fine thoughts, gracefully and clearly expressed.

From what has been said it must not, however, be inferred that we should not petition the Almighty to deliver us and our homes from bombs, and our soldiers, sailors and airmen from death. Let me quote R. H. Coats again: "The prayer of petition should deal with everything that concerns us, whether natural or spiritual . . . . The prayer of petition meekly refers the granting or denying of its requests to the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Similarly R. H. Coats gives us a fine defence of intercessory prayer, though I cannot find passages short enough to quote. Equally effective is his disposal of the argument that the efficacy of prayer is only subjective.

The space allotted to me is more than filled. Let me close with three quotations: "Criticism of prayer dissolves in the experience of it." "Among the greatest of all miracles worked by prayer is faith in prayer itself." "God vindicates His justice

by saving man from the doubt of it, and not by demonstrating to him the truth of it." The first and third quotations are from P. T. Forsyth, and the second from Dora Greenwell.

A. C. UNDERWOOD.

### RECENT READING.

DURING the last year two books swam into my ken, like Keats' planet, and still shine with undiminished lustre. The first was Macneile Dixon's Gifford Lectures on "The Human Situation" (Arnold, 7s. 6d., and marvellously cheap). These are unlike any such lectures I have ever read; it must be one of the most brilliantly written books of recent years. Every page gleams with gems of thought and expression. To mark memorable passages would be to line almost every margin. It is a philosophical study of universal and surpassing interest. Here are the ancient problems of Man, his place in the world, and his destiny, discussed as they have seldom been discussed, frankly, challengingly, and with contagious courage. Dr. Matthews said of this book that it had the great merit of asking the questions the plain man would like to ask, and suggesting answers the plain man can understand. The answers may not always be the ones we would give, but to raise the right questions is itself a great contribution. No man can read this book and not be enheartened. The second book was Sholem Asch's "The Nazarene" (Routledge, 9s.). Asch is a Jewish novelist of European reputation, and he has brought to this account of Jesus, in addition to many years' study (very evident in the book), the imagination of a genius. His amazing knowledge of the historical background, his natural familiarity with Jewish life and thought, and his power of recreating character, mark this book off from others as perhaps the greatest of the "Lives" of Christ. It may be that it is only in the form of fiction that the divine story can be made to live as it lives here. It raises the vital question: "Who was He?" in such a way, and presents Christ so reverently, that the Christian answer is inescapable, though Asch does not give it. Incidentally it gives an "explanation" of the betrayal which is a variant of De Quincey's, but more subtle and more tragic. These two books I have read and re-read, and hope to read again.

Two older writers have held my loyalty. It is the current fashion to disparage Robert Browning as a Christian thinker.



It is a fashion we may safely disregard. Most of those who profess to despise him on this account reject the faith he defended, and should be ignored. Browning was a great Christian poet and teacher, and his teaching is specially appropriate to our present situation. No one can do more to fortify us in these days of stress. I was pleased this week to discover that Lord David Cecil in his preface to "The Oxford Book of Christian Verse," restores him to his right place as the first of the four major Christian poets of the nineteenth century and pays special tribute to his religious teaching. The other writer is Dora Greenwell. Her two small but precious books, "Two Friends" and "Colloquia Crucis," have often been in my hands. I fear they are being forgotten or known only by hearsay. But they are deep books and assuredly are books for the hour.

One need not apologise for reading "escapist" literature these days, but the greatest help comes from books which serve to keep our sense of proportion right. The war is always with us; it fills the earth with its tumult and the air with its ministers of death. It is terrifying in its magnitude and in its issues. But it is not the greatest thing that has ever happened in this world. The greatest thing, compared to which even the war is a mere flicker in the film of history, was the Birth of Christ, which we have just commemorated—the Incarnation of God, which, as Ignatius said, was "the mystery of a shouting wrought in the stillness of God." To realise that this infinitely greater event was as real as the war, and infinitely more significant, is to see things in their true proportions and to keep a sober and steadfast mind. Any book which brings us into contact with this Infinite is a means of grace.

B. G. COLLINS.

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### MIDDLETON MURRY—AND ALL THAT.

MR. MURRY'S latest book—"The Betrayal of Christ by the Church" (Dakers, 5s.)—certainly ought to be read, but I shouldn't buy it if you're not flush; I should borrow it, as I did. I doubt whether it will last long: though bits of it ought to. Middleton Murry's theme is the familiar one that the Churches have let the common man down and have failed the Master. We have had a lot of books like this, some reverently written (like the out-of-date "Man Nobody Knows" and "The Book Nobody Knows"), and others very irreverent, like "The Adven-

tures of a Black Girl," by Bernard Shaw. Mr. Murry's book is wholly reverent, and in places most appealing with a winsome tenderness; and withal I bear him record that he has a zeal, but I am bound to add, not according to knowledge.

Starting from the assertion that Christianity is an anæmic and feeble thing, which he defends by saying that few people now go to church and that they hear nothing worth hearing when they get there, he traces the historical causes of this as he sees them. He claims that vital Christianity has declined alarmingly within this last generation, and compares W. E. Gladstone with Lord Halifax to prove it. He makes a wanton attack on Lord Halifax of such virulence and upon such small grounds (which he follows up by an equal trouncing of the Bishop of Ely on even smaller ground) that it coloured the whole book for me and made me blush for him. Anyone could convict any public figure of almost any kind of inconsistency by isolating a few of his public words and comparing them. I daresay I could make even Mr. Murry contradict himself if I went through his books with a scurf comb: and I think this chapter is deplorable. But then there follows a rapid historical review of the Christian Church which is so brilliant and penetrating, although one-sided, as to redeem the book once again. In brief, his view is that the Church has become too worldly by becoming nationalist. He admired the Church when it was truly Catholic and supra-national (i.e. before the Reformation). It was then, he asserts, free to say what it thought. But now the Church has become the Churches—Anglican, German, Dutch and so on; and has thus become a mere political institution and forfeited the respect of the plain man. Being thus tied to Cæsar, it has been unable to tell about God. The Churches have betrayed Christ by allowing the nations to work up again to war and by trying to justify it. The only way now is to break away and found a new Church, by simpler living and possibly along the lines of the communities of pacifists who are now being driven to do land work.

What can I say within the compass of the space allowed me that can even remotely resemble what I should like to say about all this? Would I had double the space! First I give a few examples of the healthily disconcerting penetration of Mr. Murry's criticisms. "Quite the *least* important thing Christians can do is to represent this as a just war." "If the



Church is indeed sustained by Divine authority why should it lack courage?" "The difficulty of Christianity is not the difficulty of understanding a difficult thing, but of trusting a simple one." And lastly, speaking of the difference the coming of the machine into civilisation has made, "Machines cry, 'Be Christian or perish'." Next, a few examples of his astonishing ignorance (or ought I to call it naïvete?). "In no substantial respect does the Christian Church to-day differ from any other professional corporation." "The increase in postage—which shows how little our rulers care for what is civilised in modern civilisation." "Its disappearance (i.e. that of the Christian Church) would make very little difference to the actual condition of the world."

I would add a very minor point, but perhaps it is significant, that his quotations from Scripture are sketchy and obviously more from hearsay than actual acquaintance. But now to try to say something constructive. Mr. Murry's case is that the Churches must either speak better or perish. I hope he has now read "Christianity and World Order" ("Penguin," 6d.), by the Bishop of Chichester. That *is* constructive. Mr. Murry's book ought to cost 6d. and this 5s. It shows what the Churches—who have not betrayed Christ but have themselves been let down by the plain man—are still doggedly doing to save the world. It makes definite and stimulating proposals which I cannot go into here. And above all it shows that there is as much life and concern about the future within the Church as there is anywhere in the world, if not more.

I wonder whether Mr. Murry has ever really appraised (or even known) the average informed Nonconformist Christian? He gives only one crumb of praise to the Church; and though it is a rather stale one, I am grateful for it, since it is to the Nonconformists he gives it. I think he might have been saved much of his sorrow over the Church if he had sat at the feet of a normally instructed Christian teacher. After all, genuine reforms of the Church have always come from within the Church, not from without: from the Halifaxes, not the Murrys. I am driven by this book to feel that the sturdy rank-and-file Christian is doing a greater work than I realised. Wherever an ordinary working Pastor or godly layman by God's grace converts a soul, he accomplishes in fact all that Mr. Murry only writes about. It only wants us all to be doing it more earnestly and the job is done.

H. PEWTRESS.

## AN OUT-OF-DATE GOSPEL.

BY an out-of-date gospel I mean one that is outside all human dates, confronting all generations as the Word of God, and not changing its character and purpose with the changing outlooks of successive ages. It is not a provisional human speculation but the final Word of God in His Incarnate Son, and as such, not subservient to the mentality of any generation. New aspects of its richness can be discovered by different generations and by various races, but those aspects are discovered and not added to the gospel by man's ingenuity. New and better categories may be used to express its message, but the gospel itself is the timeless word of God to man in His Eternal Son.

It lives on when the categories of various periods have lost their value. In the measurements of Time man is responsible for the shorter measures—the hours and the minutes. The years and months are determined in reference to other worlds. Man's theories, in every department of thought, are, of necessity, for short measures of time. They are quickly superseded by the fuller and more exact knowledge of later scholars; but the gospel is not a temporary human theory, it is the supernatural and abiding revelation of God's redeeming grace in Jesus Christ. Consequently, this gospel cannot be made a vassal to some contemporary philosophy or science or economic system; much less a poor relation, begging its bread and even permission to live, from the swaggering intelligentsia of our day.

In the political realm Hitler thinks the gospel can be harmlessly confined within the framework of a totalitarian State, and we should not forget that Democracy has frequently sought to use the gospel more than obey it.

In the presence of these tendencies to "reduce" the gospel, to deprive it of its supernatural glory and inherent timelessness, our duty as ministers should be plain.

We should preach this out-of-date gospel, this "greater than all date" gospel, in season and out of season, when things are favourable and when they are not favourable, in times of peace and in times of war.

The gospel is God's Word to the centuries; and it confronts, challenges and judges all philosophies, theologies and forms of Christianity. It judges the Church as well as the world.



I fully believe in stating the gospel in the language of my day, and in using modern terms that will make its meaning clear, and every scrap of knowledge that will make its message forceful; but I must be careful always that it is the gospel I am preaching and not something quite different. The daily newspapers supply all the dated material our generation needs, and it is important to know this material thoroughly in order to know the world in which we are living; but our message should not be an echo of leading articles bearing the date, the ideas and the outlook of one particular day. We must preach a Divine Gospel that will redeem our generation and all generations from the misery of sin, and from political, social and economic ideas which shatter the unity of the world and destroy its peace and prosperity. It is the power of God unto salvation—that blessed state of peace with God, comradeship with our fellow-men, and a world in which every man, woman and child shall have a chance to live a life worth living.

When I study the great preachers of Wales I find that they all preached this fourth-dimensional gospel in its fullness and power, and their congregations felt that they were listening to the word of God and not of man.

Wherever they preached—in small wayside chapels, in secluded villages, or in the more populous towns—they always brought to bear upon their congregations the radiance of eternity. Our scholarship may be greater than theirs, our outlook wider, and our application of the social principles of the gospel more thorough, but if we lack their profound consciousness of God and of the eternal world, their glowing and passionate belief in the glorious uniqueness of the Gospel, and their power, through the Holy Spirit, to create a supernatural atmosphere in their services, our academic advantages will not enable us to do for our generation what they did for theirs. The world to-day, more than ever, needs God and the gospel of His Grace in Jesus Christ; and it is our privilege and opportunity to preach it with scholarship, passion, abounding joy and unfailing confidence.

W. ROWLAND JONES.

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#### FARTHEST NORTH.

“IN God’s name what takes you to Shetland?” sympathetically asked the engineer on the steamship bearing the writer on his first journey to that land; thereby accentuating inborn misgivings.

Eleven years have elapsed and much has transpired to confirm my father's parting words: "My boy, you may not find grandeur and riches in Shetland, but I assure you that a loving, warm-hearted people waits to welcome you."

Shetland consists of one hundred islands, of which twenty-nine are inhabited, and Lerwick, the capital town, is nearer Bergen than it is to Aberdeen.

Nowhere in Shetland is the sea farther away than three miles. Its western seaboard is washed by the mighty Atlantic, while the North Sea breaks in fury upon its eastern shores.

The climate, considering its northern latitude, is surprisingly warm and we are not often subjected to extremes of cold or heat.

I should think that it is unrivalled for terrific storms, which sweep over its treeless, barren islands, many of which have interesting material for the geologist and the lover of wild birds.

The population, which numbers about twenty-one thousand, is declining, and the chief industries are fishing and crofting, supplemented by intensive home production of the beautiful Fair Isle garments knitted by the women, an art originally taught them by survivors from the Spanish Armada.

The homes of the islanders are becoming quite modernised, while Lerwick would compare favourably with other fishing centres; it has healthful amenities, and boasts, justly so, of splendid educational facilities. Coal has to be imported and peat is the household fuel.

Shetlanders, whose kindness is proverbial, are generally Christian and are well served by the various denominations. The Church of Scotland has certainly about fifty churches staffed by a well-trained, efficient ministry; the Methodist Church has ten churches, the United Free Church of Scotland eight, the Congregational and the Baptist each five, and I believe the Episcopal Church has two. There are also Brethren Assemblies and possibly a few Undenominational meeting places.

The five Baptist churches were all founded by Sinclair Thomson, a very humble man, who prior to his conversion was pilot of a smuggler, but who earned for himself by his zealous consecrated labours the title of "The Apostle of the Shetlands."

Two of these churches, with honourable records, now seemingly face extinction owing to decreasing population. This is one of the major problems all little churches are confronted with. We have no stable industry and the young folk drift southwards or to the colonies. The other churches are, I believe, vigorous and prosperous and staffed by gifted and devoted ministers, labouring incessantly for the salvation of souls and the spiritual and moral enrichment of their respective peoples. The Lerwick church in the fishing season is a sight never to be forgotten on any Sabbath night, packed almost to suffocation with fisher folks thirsting for the Word of God.

The Dunrossness Church is, in my opinion, the most stately church in Shetland, and is unique in this respect that its plan was drawn by its talented minister, the late Rev. Mr. Fotheringham. Here also a great and continuous evangelical witness is being graciously maintained.

Burra Isle Church, which it has been my privilege to be minister of for almost twelve years, is a small church capable of holding two hundred people and was founded in 1820, and has never lost its warm, evangelical fervour in all its fruitful years of witness.

I have also to minister to two out-stations; to reach one of them I require to use a sailing boat. Very often the seas hinder, and we are conscious of the full meaning of the term "weather permitting."

These waters prevent many a happy season of fellowship and make a Fraternal well-nigh impossible.

Our Shetland Baptist churches do manage to unite at least once a year in conference, but it is not the first occasion that I have watched the heaving billows seal afresh my isolation.

Pastoral work and a keen interest in local affairs tend to make the minister's life busy and, I trust, not unfruitful.

There are many factors here, as elsewhere, which make aggressive evangelism difficult, but the Shetland churches of all denominations, not least the Baptist, are alert to present opportunities and yearn for the breath of God in revival blessing upon them.

"Brethren, I earnestly covet your prayers for this part of His vineyard."

WILLIAM J. ISBISTER.



## FULFILLING ONE'S MINISTRY.

WE are living in times as great as they are difficult, and it is wise to look at the bases on which we stand.

All of us have our favourite texts, and the message of St. Paul to Archippus in Coloss. 4, 17, is one of mine. How faithfully the great Dr. Steadman (President of Rawdon College from 1805-35) enjoined its contents on his students when they settled. In the first place, no man called by God to the ministry can have any other alternative.

When I once read of a theological professor accounting for the supposed lack of ministerial candidates on the grounds that young men were "giving themselves to the wider ministries of literature and art!", I felt the speaker was quite unfit for his post. If God in His mercy has called us, we dare not refuse nor forsake His call for something else, however tempting.

In the second place, if God has called us to this work, the same spirit and standard must apply to our "calls" from individual churches, which are severely criticised by many of the laity through the mercenariness or "worldly wisdom" of some.

If we are prepared to put our trust in God, as regards these, to the test, not only shall we obtain that vital sense of inward peace in our work, however difficult it may be, but I believe that we shall always find our temporal wants supplied. If we have to choose between two, then surely our duty will be to that church whose need is greatest and which we are most competent to supply.

I am as familiar as many with rough places and tight corners, but I have never known God let me down, and conversely—seemingly improved conditions and circumstances are usually attended by bigger liabilities.

I care not whether we are called to city, town or hamlet, our job is *there* until it seems that the Hand of God bids us move.

Let us once forget this, and we are in danger of becoming mere buyers and sellers of spiritual wares in the Temple of God. The power and influence of the "long pastorate" needs to be restored, and I have yet to find a really healthy church which does not include at least one such in its record.

The spiritual atmosphere of our churches and denomination can never rise above our own; and if we emphasise the meaning and the power of "Whosoever two or three—there

am I in the midst," a deep response will begin to be re-echoed even from the most unpromising quarters. I often think the best help our Superintendents can render us, is not to clip men to churches and churches to men (to the eventual undoing of all), but to come to where we are already and show both minister and people how to face their mutual problems as in the Presence of God.

If not, then we are better out of it altogether, for no amount of juggling can ever replace the Power which alone can turn alleged "failures" into those who can succeed.

J. LESLIE CHOWN.

### EDITORIAL.

IT is our desire that THE FRATERNAL should become increasingly useful in the service of the Fellowship. With this end in view we invite constructive criticism and suggestion. In the name of all concerned we express thanks to writers of articles, to the treasurer and business manager, W. H. Pratt, to the librarian, H. M. Angus, and to the chairman and members of committee. They have served us well, and we are grateful. The blessing of God be with us all.

### MEMBERSHIP.

The aims of the Fellowship are set out on the inner cover of this issue. They should appeal to every member of our Brotherhood throughout the denomination. We commence the year with a membership of about one thousand. It needs only a little effort on the part of those who have joined, and especially of the secretaries of local Fraternals, to ensure that all our men are enrolled. All services are honorary, therefore subscriptions contribute directly to furthering the aims of the Fellowship, one of which is *Every minister a member*.

### FARTHEST NORTH.

Our Fellowship member "Farthest North," the Rev. W. J. Isbister, minister in Lerwick, Shetland, in response to our request, has been kind enough to write some account of life and work in his far-off parish. We trust that both the writing and reading of the article will make real the bond of fellowship with our brother in his rather lonely post, and doubtless a letter from one and another of our readers would further strengthen the fellowship.

## OUR APRIL ISSUE.

We are grateful to Gwilym Davies for his two articles on the European situation, and are glad to announce that he has kindly promised a third, which will deal with the Pope's peace proposals, the subject being "The Vatican in International Politics"; and Harry Pewtress will follow his study of Middleton Murry's book with a contribution on the post-war work of the Church.

ED. BOARD.

## SECRETARIAL.

*November Committee.* The November committee was well attended, considering circumstances, and was fully representative. Tentative arrangements were made for the Annual Meeting and the name of a prominent religious leader was agreed upon as speaker. It was also decided to adopt a suggestion made in several quarters that time for discussion should be allowed.

The Assembly will be asked, as a war-time measure, to reappoint the present officers and committee for a further term. Some changes in the committee are inevitable owing to ministerial removals: Association secretaries are asked to intimate to the Fellowship secretary whether their present representatives are able to continue in office or not.

*Resolution from West Midland Fraternal.* Consideration was given to proposals submitted by the West Midland Fraternal whereby local Baptist Fraternals might be more closely linked to the Fellowship. Matters of interest to the ministry, it is suggested, might be discussed by local Fraternals, and sent on via the Association Ministerial Meetings, to the Pastoral Session for its consideration. Obviously such a scheme would involve considerable secretarial work, and this, together with other points, was referred back to the W.M. Fraternal.

*Bombed Areas.* Earnest thought was devoted to the needs of brethren and churches in areas devastated by the war. It was felt impracticable to inaugurate a special Fellowship Fund: some donations which had already been received were, with the consent of the donors, allocated to our Benevolent Fund, to be used for special cases. The B.U. has rightly taken up the matter, and we hope that the Emergency Fund will be widely supported.

Many of our ministers are passing through a season of almost unparalleled difficulty and sacrifice—they are faring



bravely forth and in many cases are making the very difficulties an avenue for new forms of service. The record of what is being done for the soldiers, the evacuees, the homeless, the injured, the bereaved, forms at least one reply to the criticism recently levelled against the Church by Mr. Middleton Murry. The number of churches, schools and manses damaged or destroyed assumes considerable proportions, as do the sufferings of our members. Our Fellowship should especially remember their brethren at the Sunday morning watch.

*Sustentation Fund.* The second Sunday in March draws on, with its annual appeal on behalf of the Sustentation Fund; or, to put it in warmer words, on behalf of those many churches in town and country where our witness would be almost impossible but for the grants made from the Fund. This year circumstances in so many of our churches will adversely affect the results, and there is always the fear that the scale of grants shall be imperilled. A great deal depends on the loyal advocacy of the minister; he may prepare beforehand for the appeal, and emphasise it on the Sunday, or he may content himself to allow it to take its own course. We urge the members of our Fellowship to secure such a response this year as shall hearten our leaders, and encourage those churches who so bravely maintain their work and witness in difficult circumstances.

*Polity Commission.* It is understood that the Polity Commission is nearing the completion of its labours, and that a Report may be expected at an early date. The terms of reference are wide, and will naturally include the consideration of such important questions as the closer grouping of churches, the possibility of a common Sustentation Fund, ministerial stipends and terms of service, the Superintendency and the supply and training of candidates for the ministry. The Report, to which considerable time and attention have been devoted, will be eagerly awaited. How far can the Denomination, without sacrifice of its vital principle of Independency, adjust itself to the new era? That is the comprehensive question which will guide all discussion when the Report is available.

*Personal.* We gladly welcome Herbert Anderson into membership. He ought to have joined long ago, but, better late than never. He is making amends by preparing an article for a future issue on the situation in India—a subject upon which he is able to speak with the authority borne of long experience.

Hearty congratulations to Frank Smith, who has recently completed 40 years in his Ilford pastorate. All Ilford knows and respects its Baptist bishop. We hope to record his jubilee.

We are glad to know that Frank J. Exley is recovering from his serious illness, and pray that he may be long spared to continue his generous service to our churches. J. R. Edwards, too, has been away from his pulpit for several Sundays, but hopes soon to return to full duty. We trust his breakdown was in no way attributable to his editorial duties to THE FRATERNAL.

SYDNEY G. MORRIS.

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#### BOOK NOTICE.

"BLAZING THE TRAIL," a pageant of British Baptist history by Marguerite Williams (Kingsgate Press, 6d.). In the interests of the Baptist Forward Movement, Miss Williams has written a pageant of British Baptist history. There are twelve scenes. Among the "characters" introduced are: Waldo, Manz, Joan of Kent, Milton, Bunyan, Carey, Spurgeon. Many of our people are unfamiliar with the story of the Baptists. Let them witness this pageant: they will be informed and inspired. As for the young people who present it, they will surely catch the spirit of our loyal and heroic fathers—and mothers. To all who would know our great story, and would help our world-wide denomination to continue a witness never more needed than at the present critical hour, we commend "Blazing the Trail."

S.R.E.

#### IN MEMORIAM.

BRETHREN highly esteemed for their character and work's sake have recently passed from us. E. R. Pullen of Southampton, and Thos. Hancocks of Ramsgate, each had completed notable pastorates of 40 years in one church: each had been president of his Association and each took a deep interest in the wider work of the Union and the B.M.S. J. A. Jones, who died in his 80th year after a long and honoured ministry, exercised five pastorates, and J. M. Sturgess, who commenced his ministry in 1895, was one of the oldest members of our Fraternal Union. Our loving sympathy goes out to the relatives of these our brethren, the memory of whose devotion we shall long cherish.

All these matters of personal interest should find a place in our prayers, especially at the Sunday morning watch.

S.G.M.



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